

## MINUTES

### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

March 4, 2015

A meeting of the Committee of the Whole of the County of Kaua'i, State of Hawai'i, was called to order by Mel Rapozo, Chair, at the Council Chambers, 4396 Rice Street, Suite 201, Līhu'e, Kaua'i, on Wednesday, March 4, 2015, at 4:48 p.m., after which the following members answered the call of the roll:

Honorable Mason K. Chock  
Honorable Gary L. Hooser  
Honorable Ross Kagawa  
Honorable Arryl Kaneshiro  
Honorable JoAnn A. Yukimura  
Honorable Mel Rapozo

Excused:     Honorable KipuKai Kuali'i

The Committee proceeded on its agenda item, as follows:

COW 2015-01     Communication (02/02/2015) from Councilmember Hooser, requesting the presence of the District Engineer, State Department of Transportation (DOT) – Kaua'i District, to provide an update on the DOT's pending highway projects. This briefing shall include the four-lane widening project on Kūhiō Highway 56 in Kapa'a and other highway mitigation plans for the Kapa'a / Wailua corridor, including the four-lane expansion in the area fronting Coco Palms. **(This item was Deferred.)**

Council Chair Rapozo:             Mr. Hooser.

Councilmember Hooser:           Yes. I am not sure what the motion is, but if I can speak on it.

Council Chair Rapozo:             The motion will eventually be to defer.

Councilmember Hooser:           Okay.

Council Chair Rapozo:             But let me just say that the Department of Transportation was not able to make the schedule today.

Councilmember Hooser:           Right.

Council Chair Rapozo:             So, I will entertain a motion to defer until March 18<sup>th</sup>, but I will take any discussion that there is.

Councilmember Hooser:           Just for the record, we had our Goal Setting Workshop recently with the Mayor and we spent some time at that workshop talking about transportation. I am very pleased that the State Department of Transportation has agreed to come and brief us. Some of us have asked them in the past and they

declined. Two (2) years ago I asked them and they did not feel like they wanted to come. I am pleased that they are coming. I wanted the body to know that I have also asked the County people in charge of our County roads to come and to be prepared to discuss any working together with the State they might have. The reason that only the east side traffic is being addressed in this communication is because in the interest of time, I wanted to address that first. Then without scaring them away, I will ask them to come back at a future date and time to discuss the traffic coming in from the south and west side. As well all know, on the east side there is at least three (3) if not four (4) potential significant development projects that are being discussed and the traffic there is gridlock far too often. I thought it was appropriate to start the discussion at that level and let the Department of Transportation have a full discussion with us but for the public's benefit to what exactly is going on because people keep asking and people are very frustrated about this. It is a good opportunity and I appreciate the Committee's willingness to hear this issue. Thank you.

Council Chair Rapozo: Thank you. Any other comments?  
Mr. Kagawa.

Councilmember Kagawa: Thanks to the luxury of having Driver's Education for Kapa'a High School under my belt for the past seven (7) years or so, I think I am up there as far as persons who drive past that stretch because if I drive on that day, I will pass it at least four (4) times. Just in the past month, the traffic backup in the afternoon, the amount that bypass backs up, and the slow pace at which the main highway moves is pretty scary. I do agree that we address it now, we find out some answers, and what is in the plans. One of the things that I feel badly about is that now that Coco Palms is seeking approvals at Planning, they are being, I guess, asked as to how are they going to fix that. I think Coco Palms should have never been off of the radar as far as coming back. It was a hotel. It surely took a very long time to get progress, but I think it is the State's responsibility in trying to work with the County to try and solve that traffic. The traffic is bad now. Should Coco Palms come aboard or should more developments come aboard, it is going to get worse. I am scared at just now. The present is just getting worse and worse. I would like to see some counts of cars during peak times of the day especially during the afternoon. I would hope the State has some type of information when they come and if they do not, maybe they can start doing some. Something is happening and it is getting worse. Yes it is alarming when we talk about doing any change on the east side or anything that is going to affect traffic going east or coming back in that area is really going to create more concern. I think we have to deal with this now. It cannot be put off. I thank Councilmember Hooser for putting it on. Thank you.

Council Chair Rapozo: Councilmember Yukimura.

Councilmember Yukimura: I think the observation of Councilmember Kagawa and the initiative of Councilmember Hooser are indicative of our traffic system reaching its maximum. The result is because we have done land use plans without traffic circulation plans. We need not only counts, but we need origin destination studies so we know which ones are short trips where people are going from Coconut Plantation to Kapa'a Town or from Pono Kai to Lihue, which ones are through trips, which ones are visitors, and which ones are local traffic so that we can know how to improve the traffic. There is also, I believe, no quicker solution than looking at public transportation to help take some cars off the road, but that is going to need money and that is why I think we need to look at this earmark for transportation in order that we start addressing a major...

Council Chair Rapozo: We are on highway, JoAnn.

Councilmember Yukimura: This is about highway.

Council Chair Rapozo: I know, but you are talking about a measure that is pending. Just keep it to the...

Councilmember Yukimura: It is related to the traffic. You cannot talk about solving the traffic problems without talking about public transportation without talking about funding. We will be asking questions of the Department of Transportation about funding for different infrastructure solutions, but that is not going to solve the problem. So, that is why we need to look at a multi-modal solution which takes us back to the bus and funding for the bus. Thank you.

Council Chair Rapozo: It never seems to amaze me. JoAnn, you get the apple for the day for always trying. Ironically, I...go ahead.

Councilmember Yukimura: I do not want the apple. I want the votes.

Council Chair Rapozo: Okay. Again, reasonable minds can disagree. I think many share my philosophy that we need a new highway. It is time for a new road and many will disagree with that. I just want to make a comment. Councilmember Kaneshiro was with me when we were in Washington D.C. and it was quite disturbing to hear from our Congressional Delegation, at least three (3) of them, that Hawai'i has a unique ability to get funds or get funds approved from Congress for highway projects and transportation, but we have the worst record for spending it. That in fact, they had mentioned somewhere in the amount of seven hundred million dollars (\$700,000,000) that has not been spent. They are very hesitant to continue to fund Hawai'i projects if we are not spending the money. I was shocked to hear that. I do not know about Councilmember Kaneshiro, but my eyes opened up like seven hundred million dollars (\$700,000,000)? Really? I kind of had hoped that we would have had this discussion today and I am not sure Mr. McCormick is the right person, but I understand we will have his boss here as well. I am definitely anxious to hear what they have to say. Now how much of that is allocated for Kaua'i, I do not know. Again, the solution is much more than a multi-modal system. It has so many fingers on this thing that we have to explore them all. The bottom line is we have to start and we cannot just talk about it. As we addressed our Congressional Delegation, Mr. Kagawa talked about Coco Palms, but the feasibility or the quality of the project is not even talked about. The public cannot even get to the quality or the possible positive things that this hotel will bring because of the traffic. They do not get passed that traffic door and so they cannot explore the project. It is "No, everything no until we fix the infrastructure" which means housing out the door. Everybody is complaining about an eight hundred (800) unit subdivision in Kapa'a not because it is a bad project, because of the infrastructure and because of the traffic. So, we have to take care of the traffic. We have to fix the traffic. You are right, Ross. The State has an obligation or it might have been Arryl who said it. The State has an obligation to maintain the infrastructure as well. We need to facilitate that, we need to assist, and hopefully our Congressional Delegation can help. Nonetheless, we need to get started. Councilmember Yukimura.

Councilmember Yukimura: Well, for the last twenty (20) years we have been starting on that *mauka* bypass road. We have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars if not millions and the estimate is that it is going to cost one billion dollars (\$1,000,000,000). The projection from our Long Range Land Transportation Plan is

we are due about six hundred million dollars (\$600,000,000) in Federal match moneys, eighty percent (80%), for the next ten (10) years. Six hundred million dollars (\$600,000,000) over ten (10) years. It cost eighty million dollars (\$80,000,000) to go two (2) miles widening the highway two (2) lanes to four (4) lanes from Līhu'e to Kaua'i Community College (KCC). It is not like the solutions are that easy even if you have seven hundred million dollars (\$700,000,000), and that is probably for the whole State.

Council Chair Rapozo:

Mr. Hooser.

Councilmember Hooser: I have been out of the State Senate since 2010 and before I left I was able to put funds in the budget for the expansion of the four (4) lanes from the Wailua River to the bypass. So, that money at one time was allocated and that is a huge issue of the ability to do projects in a timely fashion. At that time, the entire State allocation for Federal funds was around three hundred million dollars (\$300,000,000), for the entire State. For the record, there is not enough money to go around to do major highway improvements. I am hopeful and confident there is enough short-term Band-Aids if you would, to ease significantly some of the issues. In the long-term, there will not be any major big bypass roads I do not believe.

Council Chair Rapozo:

Mr. Kaneshiro.

Councilmember Kaneshiro: I just want to say the seven hundred million dollars (\$700,000,000), from my understanding when we were there, is not the cap of how much money we have. They are saying big States like California, if they spend above their money then they get into another tier of money that is available, but they are telling us if we do not even spend the money we have then there is no sense in raising how much more money the State can get. Again like you said, it is not that easy. Hopefully we can get more projects on Kaua'i and get some money flowing here.

Council Chair Rapozo:

Go ahead.

Councilmember Yukimura: Part of the reason is the Department of Transportation just like that *mauka* bypass, they have all of these projects going that there is no way they are ever going to be able to complete all of them. So, they are not using their money strategically on projects that they can actually bring to conclusion. I mean, one of my questions is how much have we spent on that *mauka* bypass road which we are not going to ever see the results of. That is why this thing about being really strategic about where we put our money is so important. As Chair Rapozo said, until we solve our traffic problem, we are not going to have good economic development or growth. It is a major stumbling block. That is how important transportation is. Unless we solve our problems and do these land use transportation plans so we know that our land use can be supported by our transportation system, we are going to be in constant gridlock and constant anti-development sentiment.

Council Chair Rapozo:

Any more discussion? If not, I will entertain the motion to defer to March 18<sup>th</sup>.

Councilmember Chock moved to defer COW 2015-01, seconded by Councilmember Kagawa, and carried by a vote of 6:0:1 (*Councilmember Kualii was excused*).

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 5:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Allison S. Arakaki  
Council Services Assistant I

APPROVED at the Committee Meeting held on March 18, 2015:



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MEL RAPOZO  
Chair, Committee of the Whole

